



The Journal

Vol. 27

No. 49

www.cnic.navy.mil/bethesda/

December 17, 2015

NSAB Commemorates Vietnam War 50th Anniversary



PHOTO BY MC2 HANK GETTYS

Vietnam veterans, Capt. Marvin L Jones, Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) commanding officer, and NSAB's Sailors of the Year pose for a photo during a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War at the USO Warrior and Family Center at Bethesda on Friday.

By **ANDREW DAMSTEDT**
NSAB Public Affairs staff writer

Naval Support Activity Bethesda's inaugural ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War held Friday at the USO Warrior and Family Center at Bethesda (USO) honored those who served during the war.

In 1965 the United States escalated its response in Vietnam and began combat operations. On March 2, with Operation Rolling Thunder the U.S. began a sustained bombing campaign and on March 8 the first U.S. Marines arrived in Da Nang, Vietnam, which was the first deployment of a battalion-sized U.S. combat unit to Vietnam.

Lou Kerrdock, a Vietnam War veteran, shared how he went to Vietnam in 1965 and was part of Operation Starlite, which was the first battle of American troops against a large force of Viet Cong.

"I was proud to serve and when I came back, that was in March 1966 I went to the University of Maryland on the GI bill and I had to sit there every Monday and listen to this punk professor – young

punk English professor talking about his war protests over the weekend," Kerrdock said. "When we came back people were spitting on us. So I'm glad and I thank you all for doing this. There's not too many of us but I thank you very much."

Vietnam veteran Bill Johnson told the assembled crowd at the USO that he didn't want to let people know that he served in Vietnam when he returned home.

"Being a Vietnam vet has been a long journey for me," Johnson said. "On that plane ride back home – knowing the setback of the United States – that I did not fight in a very popular war and I wasn't going to get a parade or a big welcome home ... first of all, Vietnam was nothing but a nightmare ... I didn't tell anyone that I was in the military, except for my family who was very proud of me."

He said it wasn't until 15 years ago, after he had got more into motorcycles, and had bought his first leather vest that he chose to put U.S. Army 25th Infantry Division and Vietnam veteran patches on it – that he received a thank you for serving.

"A [woman] came up to me and said 'Thank you,'" he said. "What are you thanking me for?" "You're a

Vietnam vet aren't you, so thank you.' Ever since then, I've got a lot of thank-yous for my service and a lot of people walking up and saying welcome home."

Newly frocked Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jonathan Cales and newly frocked Personnel Specialist 3rd Class Jordan Davis read from Pres. Obama's proclamation commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

"In recognition of a chapter in our Nation's history that must never be forgotten, let us renew our sacred commitment to those who answered our country's call in Vietnam and those who awaited their safe return," the proclamation reads. "While no words will ever be fully worthy of their service, nor any honor truly befitting their sacrifice, let us remember that it is never too late to pay tribute to the men and women who answered the call of duty with courage and valor."



PHOTO BY MC2 HANK GETTYS

Bill Johnson, a Vietnam War veteran, speaks to the assembled audience during a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War at the USO Warrior and Family Center at Bethesda, Dec. 11.

Commandant's Column

Season's Greetings and Merry Christmas Naval District Washington!



COURTESY PHOTO

Rear Adm. Yancy B. Lindsey and his wife, Stacey, wish Naval District Washington a happy holiday season.

From my family to yours, I extend heartfelt greetings for a joyful holiday season and thank each of you for your role in accomplishing NDW's mission. What you do each and every day makes a difference for our Region and our Navy.

As I reflect on this past year, I'm reminded of how fortunate we are to live in a free country that allows us to believe, worship, and live our lives in the manner we choose. Regardless of your faith or beliefs, I think we can all agree that this season, more than any other time of the year, causes us to reflect on and appreciate those people who are most important in our lives. It's also a time to highlight and focus on those things that bring us together, that we share in common, and that make us who we

are. Differences are to be recognized and celebrated...they make us a better, more effective Navy. Thank you for who you are.

Let's never forget those Navy personnel who are operating forward, many serving in harm's way across the globe, away from family and friends. I ask that you keep them and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

Finally, please be safe this holiday season. If you plan to travel, don't forget to consider any hazards and mitigate the risks to your safety. A few moments of forethought can ensure we all have a happy holiday break and return safely for the start of another great year.

Once again, wishing you and yours a safe and joyful holiday season and a prosperous New Year. God bless you and best wishes for 2016.

Bethesda Notebook

Running Club Forming

The Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions and Better Opportunity for Single Soldiers groups are forming a running club which meets tomorrow from 2 to 3 p.m. in front of Bldg. 17. The club is for any level of runner and participants are encouraged to bring water and stretch to prevent injuries. For more information, contact SN Trey Pastirik at, or call 301-295-4991, Ext. 128.

Café 8901 Christmas Meal

Café 8901 in the main hospital at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center hosts its Christmas meal on Dec. 25 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Cost for the meal is \$9.05. Cost for family members of E-4s and below is \$6.80. Menu items include shrimp cocktail, Italian wedding soup, sweet potato and apple soup, bruschetta, top round of beef with au jus, honey baked ham, oven grilled cod with cucumber sauce, manicotti with marina sauce, salads, mashed potatoes with mushroom gravy, green beans casserole, wild rice, cakes, pie and other desserts. Café 8901 is in Bldg. 9, basement level.

Trauma Nursing Core Course

A three-day trauma nursing core course (TNCC) will be Jan. 20-22 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day in Bldg. 5, Rm. 4044 at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. The interactive course is designed to provide core level trauma knowledge and psychomotor skill experience. It is worth 17.65 contact hours upon completion. For more information, contact:

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Published by offset every Thursday by Comprint Military Publications, 9030 Comprint Court, Gaithersburg, Md. 20877, a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Navy, under exclusive written contract with Naval Support Activity Bethesda, Md. This commercial enterprise newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the military services. Contents of The Journal are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Navy. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or Comprint, Inc., of the products or services advertised. Everything advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color,



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NSAB Sailors Visit Elementary School



**Photos by
MC2 HANK GETTYS**

Sailors from Naval Support Activity Bethesda visited kindergarten students at S. Christa McAuliffe Elementary School in Germantown, Md. Dec. 8.

The Sailors used the opportunity to inform the children about the Navy and what it means to serve, to teach them about safety with a visit from Scruff McGruff the Crime Dog and to foster relationships in the community.



Social Skills Group Supports Teens with Autism and their Parents

**By SHARON RENEE TAYLOR
WRNMMC Public Affairs Staff Writer**

Actress Daryl Hannah has it, so does Alexis Wineman, a former Miss Montana who was a Miss America Contestant in 2013. Actor Dan Aykroyd said he has it, and some speculate Albert Einstein, who didn't speak until he was four, had it, too—autism, or as it is now known, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

U.S. Public Health Service Lt. Cmdr. (Dr.) Micah Sickel, a Child Psychiatrist at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), explained the developmental disorder is typically diagnosed in early life.

"[Individuals with autism] have problems with social skills, with relating to others. They have difficulty with nonverbal communication, such as smiling, and often with verbal communication as well. They may demonstrate repetitive movements, such as hand flapping, a restricted range of interest, and prefer routines in their life. The conversations they hold may be very one-sided, focusing on the topics of interest to them," said the deputy service chief of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service. "If somebody is in the room, [the Autistic individual] may be oblivious to them, and oftentimes prefers to be alone and stay to themselves."

Individuals with ASD may have a difficult time with their social skills, which may include eye contact. In addition, they may also have trouble distinguishing different non-verbal communication like facial gestures, as well as a problem interpreting, and noticing these gestures, or utilizing them in their own communication.

To help children with autism and their parents, WRNMMC offers weekly social skills groups, beginning each fall and spring, reflecting the school year, for 10 weeks. Currently, there is one group for "tweens" and their parents, and a second group added in January for parents only. "I've found that to be a really rich experience for everyone because it gives parents a chance to see other teens with autism and gives teens a chance to interact with parents that are not their own," Sickel said. "They will oftentimes hear advice and guidance from other teens' parents that they will then agree with, on something they didn't agree when their own parents spoke it."

The teen group begins Jan. 11, 2016. The following day, Jan. 12, a parent-only group will begin to increase the parents' understanding of autism and help them interact with their children better. The parent group will be led by both Sickel and Merencia Henson, a WRNMMC social worker who is also an Applied Be-

havioral Analysis (ABA) therapist. More than one hundred children and their parents have participated in the groups since 2009, according to Sickel.

Sickel said the exact cause of autism is unknown, but there are brain differences between those with and without autism. According to the child psychiatrist, there is also thought to be a genetic basis. There is no link between vaccines and autism, according to the CDC.

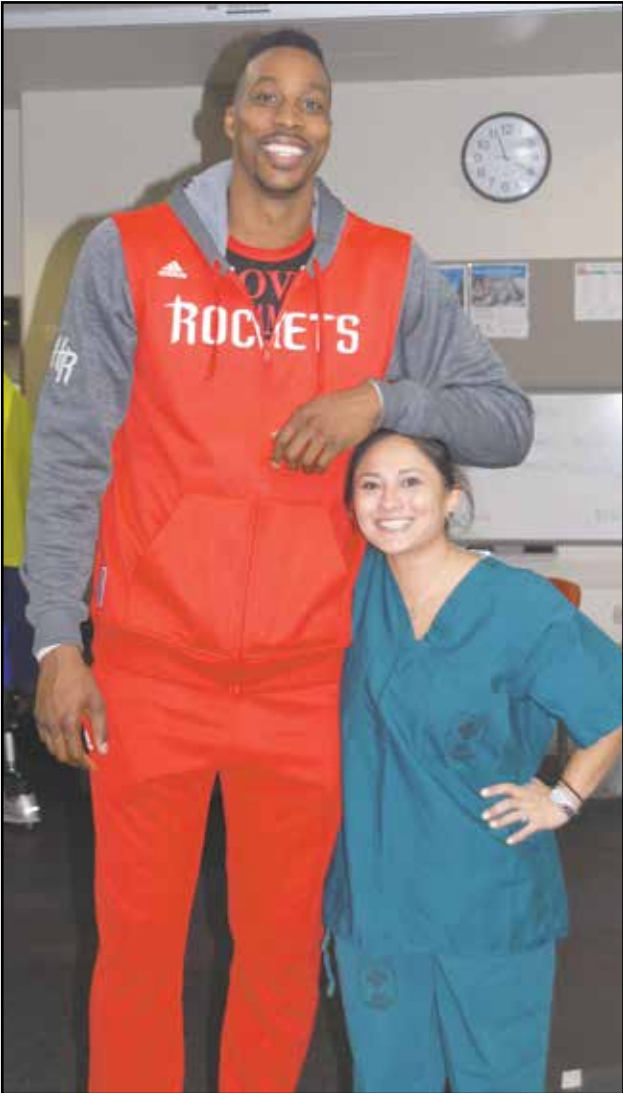
Autism spectrum disorder refers to the wide range of symptoms and severity. There are three different levels of autism which range from mild to severe, Sickel explained. Severity is determined by the activities an autistic individual is able to participate in without assistance, and the amount of support or language deficit.

Level 3 requires very substantial support with severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication. This is the most severe type of autism. Level 2 requires substantial support, and level 1 requires support. Asperger Syndrome was part of the autism spectrum but is no longer a diagnosis per the latest release of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition. Prior to the change, Asperger Syndrome was diagnosed in those individuals who had all the characteristics of autism except for the language deficit.

At WRNMMC, each new social skills group chooses a focus collectively. The main focus of the fall social skills group was communication, using role play and discussion within the group.

"We work on things like making good eye contact; how to indicate to someone that you're listening to what they're saying; how to join a conversation when you see other people already talking; how do you keep

Houston Rockets visit WRNMMC



Photos by
BERNARD LITTLE AND SARAH MARSHALL

The Houston Rockets of the NBA remained in the Washington, D.C. area Wednesday, Dec. 9 after playing the Washington Wizards to visit wounded warriors, their families and staff at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Thursday, Dec. 10. “It was great,” Rockets CEO Tad Brown said via email. “[It] was an honor for the team to be there. All of us were humbled, moved and really enjoyed the chance to be there and get to know the [service members] and their families.”



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'Resident Mrs. Claus'

FRSA Meets the Needs of Wounded Warriors and their Families Year-Round

By **SHARON RENEE TAYLOR**
WRNMMC Public Affairs Staff Writer

Less than 10 days before Santa's biggest day of the year, another "giver" prepares to provide items for service members recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), and their family members.

Instead of a magical workshop, Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) Linda Rasnake maintains an enchanted donation room filled with items, from toiletries to shoes, and several lending closets with even more.

For the last four years, she has helped to meet the needs of family

members who have often left home in a hurry to join the bedside of their loved one at the nation's largest military medical center—small appliances, high chairs, car seats and more. As the spouse of a former Soldier, more than 12 years ago she found herself in their same shoes, tending to her injured husband as he recovered at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

"She came equipped with the experience to be a 'mom' for hundreds of service members," explained the wife of an Army pilot. She said Rasnake always ensured she had a toothbrush, as the spouse maintained a vigil at her husband's side. "She has this intrinsic sixth sense to know what a person needs, sometimes even before they do."

"To say that Linda

Rasnake is a combat multiplier would be a vast understatement," explained Col. Christopher Boyle, Commander, Warrior Transition Brigade-National Capital Region. According to the commander, the effort to support Wounded Warriors is strengthened by Rasnake. "As a former caregiver, she is able to empathize with our caregivers, understand their needs, tangible and intangible, and assist them with the required support," Boyle said. "When there is a tough problem, Linda will find a solution."

Boyle said service members and their families are quick to compliment Linda. Some see Rasnake as a 'mom,' some see her as extended family, a mentor or a trusted friend. That's how Theresa Betancourt saw her.

The wife of an Army sergeant recovering



For the last four years, Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) Linda Rasnake has helped meet the needs of family members who have often left home in a hurry to join the bedside of their loved one at the nation's largest military medical center.

from a hip replacement didn't drive, and needed a cost effective way to travel between Bethesda, Md. and New York City to maintain their

home and business. "I wish there was someone I could reach out to," Betancourt remembered saying. Rasnake overheard, stepped in and

connected her with an organization to help. "Linda is the most

See **MRS. CLAUS**
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NMPDC Names Sailors of the Year

By NMPDC PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Senior Sailor of the Year

HM1 (FMF/SCW) Jarrett L. Cooper

As the Leading Petty Officer for the Directorate for Administration and for Staff Education and Training, HM1 Cooper distinctly led 14 Sailors in a multitude of tasks to include correspondence, processing supply requests, submitting facilities trouble tickets, and successfully bringing Swank Healthcare online for more than 300 personnel. In addition, his execution of his collateral duties as the Command Training Team LPO, Command Parking Champion, Assistant Legal Officer, and Vice President of the First Class Petty Officer Association were second to none.



Junior Sailor of the Year

HM2 Maya G. Torrence

HM2 Torrence expertly led 20 military and civilian assistants in the daily support of 18 dental officers in three different departments. As the president of the Junior Enlisted Association, she led 79 personnel on 29 different community service events and a total of 3,685 hours of service.

She also provided outstanding guidance, which led to three BJOQs, two BJOY nominations, one Hard Charger of the Month, and 22 Letters of Appreciation.



Blue Jacket of the Year

HM3 Fabian C. Garcia

HM3 Garcia assisted the Leading Petty Officer in administering, supervising, and training personnel. Effectively managed clinical operations of 10 staff dentists, four enlisted technicians, and one civilian hygienist covering a wide array of dental specialties and resulted in the care of 2,213 beneficiaries in 5,520 procedures valued at \$500,000. Additionally, he maintained an operating target of \$95,000, which guaranteed optimal patient care. As a key member of CSADD, he coordinated numerous fundraising events to include the "Take A Break" cart and the "CSADD Shoe Shine," both of which brought Sailors together for a good cause and assisted in keeping morale high. Petty Officer Garcia was also selected as the Navy Medicine Education and Training Command Blue Jacket of the Year.

DoD Releases 2016 Basic Allowance for Housing Rates



From U.S. DEPARTMENT
of DEFENSE

WASHINGTON (NNS) — The Department of Defense has released the 2016 Basic Allowance for Housing rates. Basic Allowance for Housing rates will increase an average of 3.4 percent when the new rates take effect Jan. 1. An estimated \$21 billion will be paid to approximately one million Service members. On average, Basic Allowance for Housing rates will increase approximately \$54 per month.

Continuing to slow the growth in compensation costs, the 2016 Basic Allowance for Housing Program expands the member cost-sharing element (out-of-pocket expense). Based on the authority provided in the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, the cost-sharing element was increased to two percent. The cost-sharing amounts incorporated in the 2016 Basic Allowance for Housing rates vary by grade and dependency status and range from \$24 to \$57 monthly. This means for 2016, a typical member will need to absorb two percent of the national average housing cost by pay grade. This rate computation change slows the growth of certain military pay and benefits in a fair, responsible, and sustainable way. Even with these nominal changes, the overall military pay and benefits package remains robust and healthy.

Housing cost data are collected annually for over 300 Military Housing Areas in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. An important part of the Basic Allow-

ance for Housing process is the cooperation from the Services and local military housing offices in the data collection effort. Input from local commands is used to determine in what neighborhoods data is collected and to direct the data collection effort towards adequate apartment complexes and individual housing units.

Median current market rent and average utilities (including electricity, heat, and water/sewer) comprise the total housing cost for each military housing area and are included in the Basic Allowance for Housing computation. Total housing costs are developed for six housing profiles (based on dwelling type and number of bedrooms) in each military housing area. Basic Allowance for Housing rates are then calculated for each pay grade, both with and without dependents.

An integral part of the Basic Allowance for Housing program is the provision of individual rate protection to all members. No matter what happens to measured housing costs — including the out-of-pocket cost

sharing adjustment noted above, an individual member who maintains uninterrupted Basic Allowance for Housing eligibility in a given location will not see his/her Basic Allowance for Housing rate decrease. This ensures that members who have made long-term commitments in the form of a lease or contract are not penalized if the area's housing costs decrease.

The Department is committed to the preservation of a compensation and benefit structure that provides members with a suitable and secure standard of living to sustain a trained, experienced, and ready force now and in the future.

For more information on Basic Allowance for Housing, including the 2016 Basic Allowance for Housing rates and 2016 Basic Allowance for Housing rate component breakdown, visit www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bah.cfm

Service members can calculate their BAH payment by using the Basic Allowance for Housing calculator at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bahCalc.cfm.

NSAB Names Sailors of the Year



Navy Counselor 1st Class Chad Fogel

By **ANDREW DAMSTEDT**
NSAB Public Affairs staff writer

Naval Support Activity Bethesda's (NSAB) top Sailors for 2015 are disinclined to have the spotlight on them and would rather it be on the Sailors they serve; but each one earned the award by not only excelling at their jobs but in how well they represented NSAB.

Navy Counselor 1st Class Chad Fogel, Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jonathan Cales, and Personnel Specialist 3rd Class Jordan Davis were chosen as the installation's premiere Sailors for 2015.

"I think they were excellent candidates, each of them performed extremely well in their respective jobs and had tremendous command impact," said Senior Chief Jason Rakowski. "Each is well-deserving of being selected."

Fogel, who started out as watch commander when he first came to NSAB in May 2013, named several individuals who had a significant impact in helping him learn the ropes — especially when he transitioned to becoming a career counselor.

"Some people look at career counselors as glorified high school counselors, but I've been able to make a positive impact on a lot of Sailors' careers," Fogel said. "Some Sailors who would've been forced out or got out if it wasn't for the training that (my predecessor) gave me and career counseling school — they would've been forced out of the Navy. I've helped save five careers and helped extend two or three others."

He said his No. 1 priority and his advice for Sailors is to "look out for your Sailors."

"The leadership needs to make sure that they're looking out for their Sailors first," Fogel said. "If your Sailors are happy they're going to be more proactive on gate, they're going to be more pro-active during their inspections ... and when they do their jobs they're more apt to be friendlier and have a

smile and want to perform and succeed."

He said he was surprised at being named Senior Sailor of the Year, but said it showed the faith his chain-of-command had in him. He said he was proud of Cales and Davis for their awards too, saying Cales will be a great first class and that Davis was not nearly as appreciated as he should be.

Cales said being named Junior Sailor of the Year wasn't so much a personal accomplishment but showed how well his team performs.

"When you're looked at as being the top Sailor in your paygrade, you don't just get there on your own," Cales said. "I learned how to do my job from the people that I worked with that are at the same paygrade and even more from the people at a lower paygrade."

Cales started out at NSAB in security operations and was the Pass and ID supervisor during the change in the base's access control — and he is now the antiterrorism training supervisor and security department training LPO.

"I think the best thing about working on this installation is when you remind yourself why this installation is here and what the sole purpose of this installation is," Cales said. "When you think of people just standing gates or doing patrols or traffic enforcement it doesn't seem very important to some people, but when you look at it in the mindset as we're on the installation to protect the people and look after people onboard the installation from the medical facility to the university to the wounded warrior center — it kind of puts everything in a bigger picture."

Cales' advice is to not treat being in the military like an everyday job but be in the mindset that "we're in uniform service and we're serving our country."

"It's not all about you, you, you, you, you," he said. "And that military mindset gets put by the wayside at times. I think it's important that people remember why they joined the military, what it means to be a Sailor and that alone



Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jonathan Cales

should motivate them. They should — I guess, be selfless instead of selfish."

Davis said when he received the Bluejacket of the Year — he thought "oh okay, that's cool," because he feels like he is just doing his job to help his fellow Sailors.

"I want to take care of them first and foremost," he said.

NSAB is Davis' first duty station — and he is basically a one-man department. When asked about his responsibilities — Rakowski chimed in "on paper, or which one does he fulfill?"

Davis said as a personnel specialist he has to know a little bit about each Navy career, taxes and legal information, among other things.

"My responsibility on paper is personnel clerk, my responsibility to my

Sailors is taking care of their livelihood at the end of the day," Davis said "And their livelihood can be anything from just a simple updating of their personnel data to helping them with what they want to do with the rest of their naval career."

He says his favorite part of his job is that he gets to know all the Sailors in this command personally.

"I know what's going on in their work life and I know what's going on in their personal life," he said. "I help them figure out different aspects of their naval career, not just pay, not just personnel stuff — people ask me 'Davis this is what I'm thinking about doing — Davis, what do you think?' They trust me and I like to have that one-on-one interaction with people."



Personnel Specialist 3rd Class Jordan Davis

NMPDC hosts Joint Services Graduate Medical Education Selection Board

By **LT. JILL S. CUNNINGHAM**
NMPDC Public Affairs Officer

Navy Medicine Professional Development Command (NMPDC) hosted the FY-16 Joint Services Graduate Medical Education Selection Board Dec. 7 — 11 onboard Naval Support Activity Bethesda.

This board, comprised of Board Members, Specialty Leaders and other key representatives from the respective medical communities in the Navy, Army and Air Force made selections from nearly 1,100 applicants for a variety of career-enhancing graduate medical opportunities in each service such as general surgery, pathology, dermatology, radiology and emergency medicine as well as many others.

The board also discusses relevant topics such as the Career Intermission program, maternity leave policy and recent changes to conference attendance policies. At the completion of the board, 306 Medical Students will be selected to one-year internships and 222 Residents and Fellow applicants will be selected to in-service and out-service training opportunities. Vice Admiral Raquel C. Bono, DHA director, was the Board President for the second year.

Highlighting the importance of the board to the Department of Defense and the medical communities they will serve, NMPDC Com-

manding Officer Capt. Phillip Sanchez stated: “The GMESB is critical to the success of identifying the appropriate medical specialties to meet the future medical mission and to identify the best qualified physicians to prepare them for developing their clinical skills for their chosen specialty.”

Navy Medicine has assisted in making the board more cost-effective by creating a virtual scoring system that has been adopted by both the Air Force and Army. The Board concluded Friday Dec. 11 and Board Members presented their recommendations for selections to Bono.

The list of selected Navy personnel is anticipated to be released in mid-December, after obtaining approval from the Surgeon General. Alternate opportunities and selections will be announced in January 2016.

Navy Medicine Professional Development Center is part of the Navy Medicine team, a global healthcare network of 63,000 Navy medical personnel around the world who provide high-quality health care to more than one million eligible beneficiaries. Navy Medicine personnel deploy with Sailors and Marines worldwide, providing critical mission support aboard ship, in the air, under the sea and on the battlefield. For more information about NMPDC, visit: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/navmedmpte/Pages/default.aspx>



Improving Prosthetics for Amputees

NMRC Hosts the first DoD Osseointegration Program Meeting at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence

By **DORIS RYAN**
NMRC Public Affairs Officer

The Naval Medical Research Center (NMRC) hosted the first Department of Defense Osseointegration Program steering committee meeting to plan the next step in implementing osseointegration (OI) prosthesis research and clinical trials for wounded service members with upper or lower extremity amputations. OI refers to a surgical procedure to implant a device directly into a bone that will exit the skin and attach to a unique functional prosthesis. In essence, OI en-

ables attachment of an external prosthesis directly to the skeleton, and is useful for patients who cannot tolerate a traditional, socket-based prosthesis.

The steering committee met at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence, located on the campus of Naval Support Activity Bethesda, home of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Army Col. Michael S. Heimall, Interim Director, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

See **AMPUTEES**
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AUTISM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the conversation going?" the child psychiatrist said.

Is it possible for a child with autism to attend regular classes in school, take the SAT and make the dean's list?

"Yes," Sickel said. "They can do everything. There are people in the medical field, computer sciences, lawyers and professionals who are on the autism spectrum. They may have deficits in certain areas but they're still able to lead a happy, healthy life."

Military dependent Shalon Mottram and her 12-year-old son Brennen began the WRNMMC social skills group in September. She described Brennan's autism at level 1.

"It mostly affects his social skills, so he doesn't get social cues like you or I might. He doesn't understand sarcasm or know how to use it. He doesn't know how to socially interact with not [only] children his age but adults, too, focusing. He's just over that line."

Brennen, a 7th grader at Imagine Andrews Charter School at Joint Base Andrews, enjoyed the social skills group. "He did take things away from it that he applied at school and when we're out in public," Mottram said.

They tried Boy Scouts when Brennen was younger. "It didn't go over very

well. He's not fond of big crowds." But this year was different for the 12-year-old, after applying the communication techniques he learned in the social skills group. He wanted to attend a school dance—his first, ever.

"He told us it was because of therapy, learning that he needs to open up a little if he wants to have new experiences," his mother explained. She said she's learned from the social group, too.

"I've learned how similar my son is to a lot of the other children who have Asperger's, or autism, even though they're on different points on the spectrum... learning different ways I can support him but at the same time let him be him," Mottram said. "He enjoys the group because it lets him know that he isn't alone." She plans to participate in the next group in January.

The social skills groups meet in the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service, located on the 4th floor of the America Bldg. on Monday afternoons. The groups are open to patients and their parents who receive care at WRNMMC, along with Tricare beneficiaries who receive care elsewhere.

New groups will begin on Mon., Jan. 11, and Tues., Jan. 12, and meet in the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service. For more information about the social skills group, contact LCDR (Dr.) Micah Sickel at (301) 295-2492 or micah.j.sickel.mil@mail.mil.

MRS. CLAUS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

amazing person on the planet," Betancourt said. She is a solution finder. We look to her for direction."

"She's like a little [gift] store," said another Army spouse, who explained Rasnake always managed to have a last-minute birthday card, organized banquets, memorials and four large events for hundreds of Wounded Warriors and their families every year.

Whether it's trick-or-treating, or a baby shower, you can find Rasnake in the middle of it all.

When Rasnake received word that a recovering service member needed a treadmill, a month later a treadmill was delivered to their home. "She doesn't just start a project, she sees it through to see that it's done," the wife said.

A self-proclaimed diehard optimist, she's comfortable multi-tasking and giving 100 percent all the time.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Melissa Burke, operations manager for the Warrior Family Coordination Cell (WFCC) at WRNMMC called Rasnake "tenacious" with a big heart; she sees and understands needs as the caregiver she once was.

"I work with countless non-profits

to ensure our Wounded, Ill and injured Warriors and their families are taken care of to the best of my ability, to keep it less stressful for their transition back to civilian life, or return to duty."

Maj. Gerry Sharp, department chief of the WFCC first met Rasnake while he worked as a nurse case manager in the WTB, where she currently works. "Now that I have moved into this position, our offices are even closer and I work with her directly," he said. "Looking at her specific job description, her primary duties are working with family members," he explained.

If someone or an organization wants to donate physical items, the WTB will often direct them to Rasnake or the Red Cross, Sharp said. "She works hand-in-hand with us."

WTB nurse case managers refer service members to Rasnake, when it comes to assistance. "If there is a servicemember or family member who needs to fly back home, or get here to support their family member, she would assist with that tremendously," Sharp explained.

Although she works for the Army, both Sharp and Burke agreed Rasnake will do whatever she can to assist any recovering service member or their family. "She's phenomenal," Burke said.

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AMPUTEES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

(WRNMMC), welcomed the attendees saying, "This group coming together at this particular time is very important for where we have to go for advanced amputee care and rehab programs. You have a unique opportunity with the group you have assembled and with the intellectual capital you have

available. We are the world's leaders, unfortunately, in blast injury and traumatic amputee services because of what we have experienced over the last 14 years."

OI is a technology that can improve the lives of service members living with major limb amputations. By attaching prostheses directly to the skele-

ton, orthopaedic surgeons can mitigate problems associated with skin grafts and heterotopic ossification that are common after blast and other traumatic injury.

Navy Cmdr. Jonathan A. Forsberg, head of Regenerative Medicine at NMRC, and Army Lt. Col. Benjamin Kyle Potter, deputy chief of Orthopaedic Surgery at WRNMMC facilitated the day-long meeting.

Forsberg laid out the

broad agenda for the meeting, "Osseointegration is uniquely suited for wounded service members with upper and lower amputations, but the technique is complex and requires a coordinated effort. This steering committee will bring together all aspects of the technology to deliver state-of-the-art care to the wounded warfighter. First, we need to establish the priorities to guide compli-

mentary research, establish ways to work together, and make OI a reality for our patients."

He added, "Because OI is an emerging technology, we have a responsibility to introduce it to DoD beneficiaries in the most conscientious manner possible. By aligning ourselves with existing DoD research and development programs, we have the unique opportunity to develop the complementary technologies that will ultimately make osseointegration safer and therefore more widely applicable in the future."

Potter provided an overview of the care provided for wounded warfighters from point of injury in combat to care in a major Military Treatment Facility in the U.S. and the prolonged critical care and rehab needed to overcome their injuries.

"It is important, as we are thinking of this as a DoD OI program, to recognize that military patients really are unique, different from civilian trauma patients. They have unique sets of problems and a prolonged critical care period. The ultimate goal is maximize return to duty and to maximize function and quality of life for patients who realistically won't be returning to duty," said Potter.

He pointed out that service members who sustain extensive blast-related soft tissue trauma to their residual limbs often experience challenges with traditional prosthetic socket fitting and wear.

World experts in OI attended the meeting including Professor Rickard Brånemark, who recently relocated from Göteborg, Sweden to San Francisco. Brånemark developed the OPRA

device, has been performing OI procedures in Sweden and other countries for more than two decades, and only recently obtained FDA approval for the OPRA device in patients with transfemoral (above-the-knee) amputations.

Seeing an opportunity to expand the indication to patients with upper extremity amputations, Brånemark, Forsberg and Potter obtained FDA approval to begin an Early Feasibility Study in military patients this winter.

Attendees also included military and academic experts in the field along with industry product developers. They discussed all aspects of the technology to deliver future care to service members and veterans, including the clinical trials, scheduled to begin in early 2016 at WRNMMC. The clinical trials will include orthopaedic surgeons, rehabilitation physicians, prosthetists and therapists because the post-operative rehabilitation takes between 12 and 15 months.

"There are four clinical trials planned, the first will begin enrolling patients in early 2016 at Walter Reed," said Forsberg.

He added, "Having these world leaders in OI as stakeholders is critically important, and it has taken several years for us to develop this level of participation. The goal is to advance the science and technology of OI by fostering an environment of discussion and collaboration. From that comes innovation. DoD has provided a forum, funding and administrative support to conduct four multi-center clinical trials and several projects evaluating complementary technology."



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